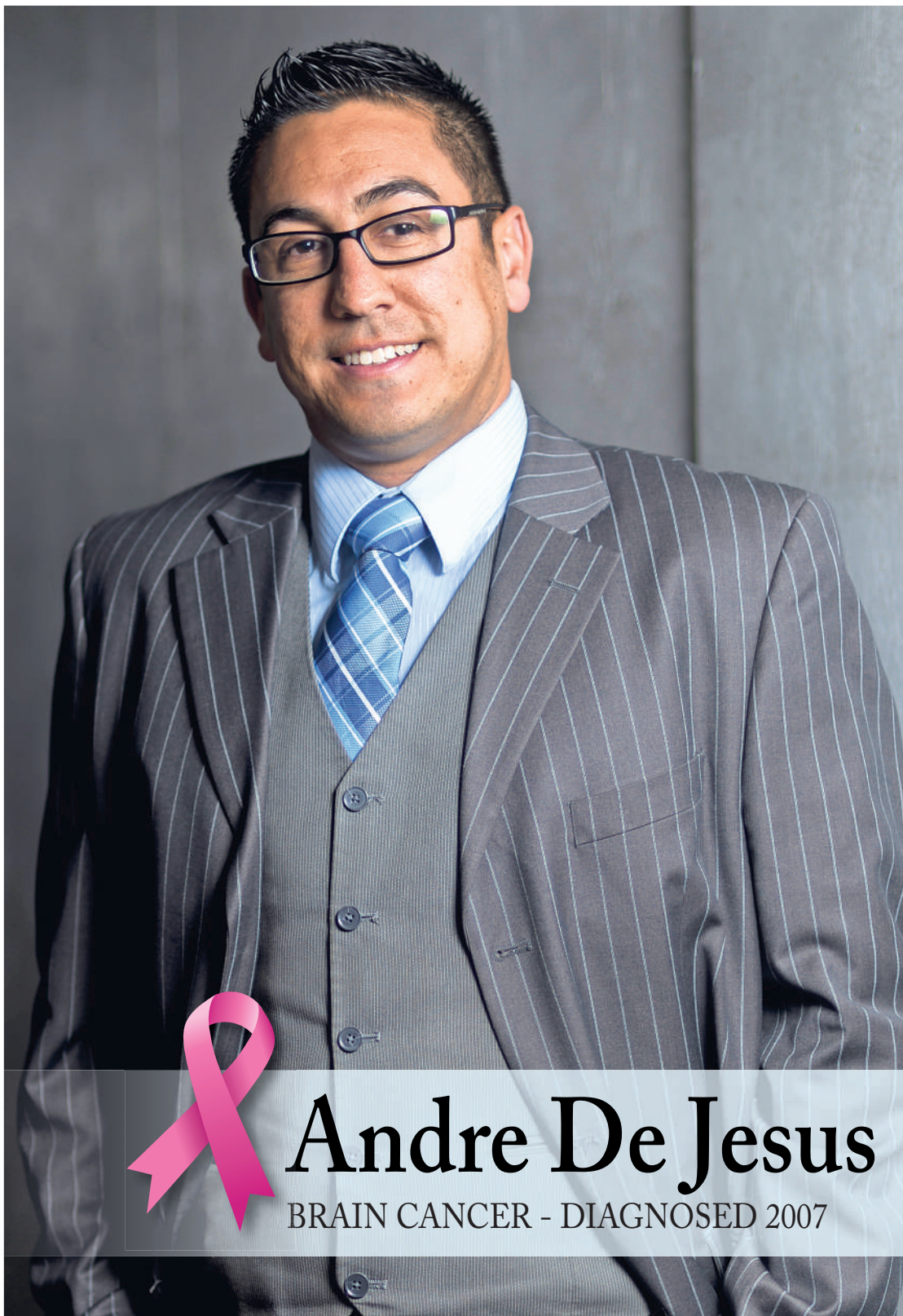


Survival and Hope *Life After Cancer*



Andre De Jesus
BRAIN CANCER - DIAGNOSED 2007

The Basics:

- **Resides:** Victorville, CA
- **Occupation:** Walmart HR Market Manager, San Bernardino Co.
- **Family:** Married 25 yrs. Children 7 and 14
- **Hobbies:** Hanging out with friends and family, mixed martial arts
- **Philosophy:** Things happen for a reason

In 2007, Victorville resident Andre De Jesus, now 34 years old, was a happily married man with two small children. He had a good job as an HR office manager for Walmart. He was young, upbeat and athletic. He had a good life.

But one day, he started seeing a “gray bubble” in his left eye. “Nobody else could see it,” he said, “but I could see it looking outwards.”

At first doctors saw nothing wrong. But after an ophthalmologist, did some additional tests, De Jesus was told there was something in the middle of his brain.

“The next thing I knew,” De Jesus said, “I was having brain surgery. What was supposed to be three hours turned into six hours.”

Following surgery, De Jesus received devastating news: The doctors said nothing could be



done. If the tumor had been under the optic nerve, as they originally thought, they could have removed it. But it was in the nerve; they only were able to biopsy it.

As a result, De Jesus is totally blind in his left eye and has 25 percent vision in his right eye. “It was a big blow,” he said.

The tumor continued to “grow, grow, grow,” and “that was the beginning of my journey,” he said

Follow-up radiation did not help. Then De Jesus had chemotherapy, which had some effect on the tumor, but “after a year, it kinda came back,” he said.

He decided to give himself a rest from treatment for a while. “Then over the summer it miraculously

disappeared,” he said. “They were going to do more but didn’t need to.”

De Jesus says the changes cancer caused in his life have been for the better. “I have always been very fast - paced; it really slowed me down. Every minute means more now,” he said. The experience “helped mature me and I see things in a positive light. It made me a better person, I believe,” he said.

De Jesus says the biggest obstacle he had to overcome was “the mental side of the business.”

“Even being a positive person, it was still hard to figure out how to be a dad. I wanted to play catch with my son but I had no depth perception. I would walk into things, I couldn’t see distances. It was very depressing. Something

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The next thing I knew, I was having brain surgery.

as simple as walking, you take for granted. I had to find a new normal for me,” he said.

“Recurrence is my worst fear in life. During my first chemo treatment, I was listening to a story from a man who had to have a surgery from a recurrence of a brain tumor. He couldn’t speak clearly and had a lot of mental damage. That is my worst fear,” he said.

De Jesus says he did not seek out a support group. “I am a pretty private person and like to keep to myself and family,” he said. “I had some friends who couldn’t handle me being sick, and they kind of went away. But a new group became really good friends and were supportive, as well as my family,” he said.

De Jesus said one friend’s words of encouragement had a lasting impact.

“When I woke up from my brain surgery, I was kind of out of it – it was the blink of an eye for me, them putting the (anesthesia) mask on to opening my eyes six hours later. I looked like Frankenstein. I was talking gibberish. One of my friends was there and said, ‘Andre, we are here for you no matter what.’”

He also received tremendous support from his coworkers and his employer, Walmart. They encouraged him to become involved in the American Cancer

Caregiver Perspective



Chezarey De Jesus says her husband, Andre’s, cancer diagnosis was “a shock. Your heart drops – it’s not something you ever want to hear,” she said.

“It was hard,” Chezarey said. During treatment, “Andre had to live in Los Angeles for about a month. My son was 2 or 3 months old, and I was in Victorville.”

News that Andre’s initial treatment, radiation, was not working was a low point. “That was, ‘oh no, this is not going well,’” she said.

“But after chemo, we got the great news the tumor had shrunk,” she said, “and then we went back again, and they said, we can’t see it anymore – it’s gone.’ That was another jaw-dropping moment.”

Chezarey relied on her faith throughout the ordeal. “What helped me was my faith. I truly believe if you have faith and have positive thoughts, that’s what’s going to get you through it. Surround yourself with people who are going to be positive and uphold your faith.”

Society’s Relay for Life, and he says he helps out whenever he can.

“Because of the amazing insurance I had, there were zero financial impacts,” he said. “If it weren’t for my employer, I would have gone broke.”

De Jesus still works for Walmart; he is market manager for HR for all of San Bernardino County.

Now, De Jesus reaches out to others who may need help when they are diagnosed with cancer. He volunteers with the American Cancer Society, and last year he gave a speech at the Relay for Life, the society’s signature fundraiser.



JOIN US!

May 12-13, 2018
Relay For Life of Barstow

May 19-20, 2018
Relay For Life of the High Desert
Register online to be included in the upcoming events and fundraisers to support our local cancer survivors and honor those that have lost their battle!

www.relayforlife.org
www.hdcancerconnection.com
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VV-00072435 (100%)

ADVERTISER: DAILY PRESS NEWSPAPER
SALES PERSON: VVPINOSA
SIZE: 10X21
PUBLICATION: VV-DAILY PRESS

PROOF CREATED AT: 3/7/2018 2:30:05 PM
NEXT RUN DATE: 03/08/18
PROOF DUE: 03/07/18 13:59:55